**SATISFACTION**

**WORKING FOR THE MAN (OR WOMAN)**

Bible Study Resource

Prepared by Dianne Shay for St Michael’s North Carlton, June 2016

**Introduction**

The book of Ecclesiastes turns the spotlight on things humans think are important whether personally, socially or systemically and challenges us to consider them from God’s point of view. Are they important for our relationship with God and are they helpful for our relationships with each other? In Ecclesiastes 2:12-26 the focus is on the things we work for and strive to achieve.

🕮Read Ecclesiastes 2:12-26

1. **The purpose of work** – *There is nothing better for mortals than to eat and drink, and find enjoyment in their toil. For to the one who pleases him God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy*

* We often think of work as just what we do for paid employment. But when it talks of work the bible speaks of both paid work and the things we strive to achieve. What do you think is the purpose of work?
* When talking about work, Ecclesiastes uses language of wisdom, knowledge and joy as well as hate, despair and vanity. What words do you think of?

1. **Leaving a legacy** - *So I turned and gave my heart up to despair concerning all the toil of my labors under the sun, because sometimes one who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave all to be enjoyed by another who did not toil for it.*
   * Do you sometimes wonder whether what you do is important to anyone else? How do you cope when you feel like what you’re doing doesn’t matter?
   * What does leaving a legacy mean to you?
   * Sometimes we create hierarchies of work – whether based on success, money or perceived virtues such as the difference we make. Christians add another hierarchy around whether the work is ‘church’ work or ‘world’ work. What are the benefits and dangers of this approach?
2. **The toll of toil** - *What do mortals get from all the toil and strain with which they toil under the sun? For all their days are full of pain, and their work is a vexation; even at night their minds do not rest.*
   * What makes work hard?
   * What are the challenges of changing work circumstances? Are there opportunities too?

🕮Colossians 3:23-24

1. **Working for the Lord** - *Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.*
   * What does it mean to you to ‘work for the Lord’ in whatever you do?
   * How does it inform your own approach to work?

**Prayer**

Spend some time praying for

* your work and toil (whether paid or unpaid) and the things you strive to achieve;
* wisdom, joy and knowledge;
* the things you’ve learned today.

**Reading Ecclesiastes:** Look for observations on the ephemeral vs the eternal. Look for observations about everyday things.

Ecclesiastes passage from New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). Colossians passage from New International Version (NIV)